



#### [Update from U.S. Senator John Cornyn](#)

**October 17, 2003**

As critics try to outdo one another in making the most outrageous charges about President Bush, I've been investing some time publicly defending our President and his strong leadership, particularly on Iraq and the war on terrorism. Unless his friends step forward forcefully, the media will print and broadcast truly misleading remarks from the opposition about President Bush without any refutation at all. Some of the silly political rhetoric on our Iraq effort is so distorted that it does a major disservice to our men and women in uniform, as well as to the President. At times, it appears that White House efforts to keep the discussion factual need support from allies, and I'm proud to take on that task.

#### **Texas Economy**

During the Columbus Day recess week, I visited some of the major economic engines of our state: the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, ERCOT in Austin and the Johnson Space Center in Clear Lake. These organizations represent hundreds of jobs for Texans and I want to increase that number. Pantex is a strong candidate for the Modern Pit Facility, which would employ more than 1,000 workers to upgrade and secure components of our nuclear weapons systems. I'm working actively to bring this important facility to Amarillo. On my trip to ERCOT, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, Inc., I addressed Texas electric power capabilities and infrastructure concerns. This issue is more important than ever in light of the recent blackouts in various parts of the country. And at the Johnson Space Center, I encouraged NASA personnel and the flight crew on the international space station to continue their important missions. I share their optimism that the shuttle will be flying again soon.

#### **Marriage**

My Senate subcommittee held a well-publicized hearing last month on the status of the Defense of Marriage Act, approved in 1996 by a strong bipartisan majority of Congress. Many commentators have suggested that the act, which defines marriage as the union between a man and a woman, is in peril because of judicial activism. I strongly support the act and will work to ensure that it remains the law of the land.

#### **Health Care**

I've been helping to secure funding for community health centers across Texas as a key component in improving the quality and accessibility of preventive health care to all Texans. During visits to centers in San Antonio and Houston last month, I underscored that these facilities provide efficient service and dramatically reduce pressure on overburdened public hospitals. I continue to believe that medical liability reform - reducing unnecessary litigation - is another critical part of making health care more affordable and accessible.

#### **Highway Funding**

During the summer, I held an official Senate field hearing of the Environment and Public Works Committee in Brownsville and roundtables in Lubbock and Wichita Falls to highlight pressing transportation needs in those regions. The Congress has succeeded in extending our highway funding legislation for five months, ensuring that vital transportation projects in Texas and across the nation will continue uninterrupted. We are pressing again to improve Texas's return on the gas taxes our citizens pay to Washington and early next year we will reauthorize this important legislation.

#### **Border Security, Immigration Reform**

Congress has approved the first Homeland Security appropriations bill, but we have a long way to go on securing our borders and improving our immigration procedures. I exchanged visits with top Mexican officials this summer to push that process forward. I have also inspected border entry points in Laredo, El Paso, and the ports in Houston and Beaumont to familiarize myself with problems facing our officials on the ground.

**Law Enforcement**

I was honored to receive the CLEAT Legislative Award recently from the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas (CLEAT) for work in supporting law enforcement issues. The critical first responders who make up CLEAT are doing a great job of keeping our communities safe. I was glad to be able to address their convention in Galveston and to reiterate my commitment of support for their important work.

**Come See Me**

If you're traveling to Washington for business or pleasure, I would greatly appreciate the chance to say hello while you're here. I have an open house in my office, Hart Senate Office Building , Room 625, from 9:00 to 9:30 AM every Tuesday while Congress is in session, so I can greet and talk with Texans who are here. Please call Denise Pleasant in my office at (202) 224-2934 to let me know you'll be coming.

Best regards,

Senator John Cornyn